

Parents = Partners

Education notes from Dr. Laurie Heinz

Park Ridge-Niles School District 64 • April 2015

Final trimester is underway

Spring is in full bloom and so is our final trimester of the 2014-15 school year! Every spring we shower our teachers with recognition during *Teacher Appreciation Week*, which this year begins on May 4. While your PTO/A might take the lead in organizing appreciation events for our dedicated staff, please consider sending your own heartfelt note of thanks to your child's teacher(s).

Did you know that according to the Illinois Association of School Boards, about 6,000 men and women in our state donate their time and talents to the cause of excellence in local school governance by serving on a school board? Almost 4,500 citizens cast their votes in the recent District 64 election, which resulted in incumbents Bob Johnson winning a two-year seat and Tony Borrelli returning for another four-year term. Joining them will be new members Mark Eggemann and Tom Sotos. Congratulations to our new members and thank you to John Heyde and Dan Collins, who will be stepping off the Board on May 4. I cannot thank them enough for their dedication and commitment to our staff and students.

Progress continues on two important studies in our District: our Master Facilities Plan and our "2020 Vision" Strategic Plan. Work is moving forward steadily on both, as they are scheduled to be presented to the Board in June. Please see further details later in this newsletter.



As you know, End-of-Year (EOY) PARCC testing will begin this week for students in grades 3-8. If you would like to look more closely at the format, sample tests can be found on the PARCC Practice Test website for [English Language Arts](#) and [Mathematics](#). Scores from the EOY will be combined with the Performance-Based Assessments (PBA) students took in March, and reported to District 64 this summer.

For me, the new buds and springtime green of the world around us is a reminder of the learning and growth we see in our students as they confidently take on more complex challenges. The final trimester is such a busy, happy time as students recognize and take pride in all they have mastered this year. Thank you for all the ways you partner with us to support your child's educational growth!

For Your Children,

Dr. Laurie Heinz, Superintendent lheinz@d64.org 847-318-4300



Arbor Day 2015 celebrations

District 64 was fortunate this year to receive trees at two schools. **Washington's** morning kindergartners enjoyed a talk from Urban Forester Jodi Carlson, who helped them plant one of three new trees donated by the City of Park Ridge. The Mayor of Niles officiated at **Emerson**, where a group of Soaring Eagles 8th graders helped to plant the tree donated by the Village at the school's northwest corner.

Calendar Reminder

Our last day of school is a full day of student attendance for all students on **Friday, June 12.**



Parent University: final events for 2014-15

We believe that when parents and schools learn together -- everyone learns more! This year, District 64 presented a [series of evenings](#) tailor-made for parents and community members to extend their own learning. The events are free and open to all adults.

Our two final events for 2014-15 will be held in advance of Board of Education meetings, to provide additional opportunities for parents and community members to stay for the meeting and learn more about District 64 initiatives and educational issues. If you haven't attended one earlier in the year, please join us now!

Assuring "Tech-cess" in the Digital Age **Monday, April 27**

Come learn all about the Chromebook and various Google Apps at the Monday, April 27 Parent University session from 6:30-7:30 p.m. at Carpenter School, 300 N. Hamlin, Park Ridge. Parents will have the opportunity to navigate some basic settings and learn about extensions and apps. The session will also provide guidance in managing device usage at home, including an overview of the SecURLy filtering system, as well as ways to promote positive and productive digital citizenship. Parents of all grade levels and community members are welcome! ► *If you are a 2nd grade parent, this would be a great opportunity to learn and ask questions about the 1:1 Chromebook program for students in grades 3-8.*

The program will be facilitated by District 64 Instructional Technology Coaches Megan Preis (Lincoln) and Rachel Labuz (Washington).

The evening is free and open to all adult members of the community, and is timed so you may attend and stay for the Board of Education meeting that follows!



Preventing the Summer Slide **Monday, May 18**

Summer slide is real! After all of their hard work all year long, students regress over the summer if they don't practice their reading and math skills. The good news is that there are many exciting and challenging activities to combat summer slide. Join us to discuss summer-friendly strategies utilizing District 64 and outside resources at this Parent University event, Monday, May 18 at 6:30 p.m. at Emerson Middle School (Learning Resource Center), 8101 N. Cumberland, Niles. The session will be led by Roosevelt School's Linda Diekman, Library Information Specialist, and Caroline Schaab, Instructional Technology Coach. The evening is free and open to all adult members of the community, and is timed so you may attend and stay for the Board of Education meeting that follows!



Use these quick links to watch the videos:

- ❖ [Overview of CEC Findings](#)
- ❖ [Findings on Learning](#)
- ❖ [Findings on Collaboration](#)
- ❖ [Findings on Results](#)

Short videos present CEC quality audit findings

► *Select from among 4 talks*

As you know, District 64 engaged the Consortium for Educational Change (CEC) to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement within District 64 through a quality audit. This District-level process, called a "System Overview Assessment," offers us an opportunity to benchmark ourselves against effective practices of other high performing districts in the areas of learning, collaboration and results. The [CEC findings](#) were shared with the Board and are informing the work of our Strategic Plan Steering Committee. The information will inspire many conversations going forward as the District focuses on continuous improvement.

Special thanks to the almost 1,000 parents, staff and students who participated in the audit process!

Out & About in Our Schools



Field School teacher is a Golden Apple finalist

Julie Chalberg, a first grade teacher at Field School, has been named one of [30 finalists for the 2015 Golden Apple Awards for Excellence in Teaching](#). Golden Apple celebrates teachers who make a difference in the lives of students, and we couldn't be prouder that Julie was selected for this honor. Ms. Chalberg has been with District 64 for seven years, all at Field School in first grade. She is the second District 64 teacher to receive the Golden Apple finalist accolade.

Debbie Graziano, now a Channels of Challenge teacher at Roosevelt and Washington schools, was named a finalist in 2009 while teaching 2nd grade at Carpenter School. The selection committee visited Field this week for a final round of classroom observations and interviews prior to the selection and announcement later this spring of the 10 award recipients.

2015 "Young Authors" winners captivate readers

Ranging from realistic fiction to fantasy, stories written and illustrated for District 64's Young Authors contest for 2015 captivated readers with their imagination, attention to detail, intriguing characters and heart-warming stories. Designed to provide opportunities for growing writers to have an outlet for their work, Young Authors is an independent, voluntary extracurricular activity. The experience allows students to stretch their imaginations and creativity while sharpening their language skills by extending the writing opportunities students are given in their writing and content area classes. Each building selected one winner per grade level; students could write independently or collaborate with a partner. The District reviewed the winning submissions to select one outstanding manuscript in each grade to receive the top award. More than 100 manuscripts were submitted by students this year. The [2015 Young Authors](#) will be recognized at the May 18 Board of Education meeting.

Roosevelt sprouts a new community garden

Principal Kevin Dwyer reports that the school's new community garden will be located just east of the primary playground near the bike racks.

Kindergarten families collected egg cartons, which each classroom is using to plant a variety of seeds. In addition, Roosevelt is purchasing four garden beds. The beds will be prepared in May for students to begin planting in June. During the summer, Roosevelt families will help maintain it. And come fall, the school hopes to include some herbs and other food items from the garden into the PTO hot lunch offerings.



Roosevelt's gardeners are anxious to get growing!

5th graders begin transition to middle school



One of our favorite "rites of spring" is preparing our 5th graders for a smooth transition to middle school. Emerson and Lincoln's principals and counselors visit the sender schools to meet with students at an assembly. Students then have an opportunity to spend part of a day at their new middle school, touring and talking with 8th grade leaders, and having lunch. The day is geared to be "kid-to-kid," so the 5th graders learn from the 8th graders "you can do it, we did it!" District 64's ["Surviving Middle School"](#) booklet, which this year the 5th graders are reading online instead of in print, offers more "straight talk" about middle school to get them off to a great start!

MUSICAL NOTES:

► Jazz Band students from Emerson and Lincoln rocked the house at *Buddy Guy's Legends* recently. Their manners and musicianship impressed the listeners, as these talented young students represented our schools and community with distinction. *Bravo!* (A [video of their visit](#) is available.) The performances were a great tune-up for the annual District 64 Jazz Festival, featuring several alumni, local residents and teachers as guest artists. We schedule our jazz festival in April to celebrate [Jazz Appreciation Month](#).

► Band and orchestra students had a wonderful experience working with members of the Park Ridge Civic Orchestra in a mentoring program. Our thanks to the Park Ridge Cultural Arts Council, the Illinois Arts Council and the PTOs for providing this funding for our students to enjoy these advanced “master” classes!

March/April “Walk & Talks”: Spring has sprung!

My visits to schools allowed me to see our students at all grade levels facing new challenges, as we entered the final trimester of our school year. Here are some of the highlights:



Thank you to ELF for funding this partnership!

❖ **Jefferson** - Students were all very excited as they completed their second gardening activity under the guidance of the Chicago Botanic Gardens' staff. The students talked about what plants need to grow, and then they each watered the soil, scooped it into their recycled water bottles, planted 3 bulbs in their bottles, and brought them home to watch their gardens grow.

Jefferson’s 4-year-olds took a field trip to the Kohl Children’s Museum and reinforced vocabulary and social skills covered in previous learning units, such as transportation, animals/pets and community helpers.

❖ **Emerson** - Channels of Challenge students were working on a film project in small groups, while grade 7 science students were engaged in “bacteria mania.”



Lincoln’s Green Team created daily “spirit” events to celebrate Earth Week and boost awareness of sustainability activities.



Emerson students gather for the opening ceremony of the annual **6th Grade Olympics**, which is the highlight of their interdisciplinary study of Ancient Greece. [Read more!](#)

- ❖ **Lincoln** - The LRC was a happening place with students working collaboratively on projects using their Chromebooks!
- ❖ **Carpenter** - Students in grade 2 worked on increasing their reading fluency through repeated reading of seasonal pieces of poetry. Students read to peers and then reread their poems at home.
- ❖ **Field** - Students were busy getting ready to dazzle their parents with Open House preparation. Students were writing “good-bye” to their current grade and “hello” to expectations and changes in their new grade. Students in Mrs. Hejza’s class were working on digital book reports using their Chromebooks.
- ❖ **Franklin** - April is Poetry Month! Students are memorizing favorite poems and improving reading



Franklin 4th graders use manipulatives to tackle fractions.



Emerson’s orchestra students received inspiration and tips from a PRCO musician.



An interactive afternoon of learning and fun at the Kohl Museum offered hands on activities for Jefferson children to use their imaginations and develop skills.



Emerson archers!



275 helmets sold!

Offered as part of Healthy Living Month in April, this year’s bike helmet sale held at Carpenter School offered families a convenient way to inexpensively outfit all their riders with high quality gear, expertly fitted by trauma nurses from Advocate Lutheran General Hospital. The event was co-sponsored by the District 64 Traffic Safety Committee.

fluency. Math also is challenging with students converting to improper fractions using manipulatives.

❖ **Roosevelt** - Roosevelt celebrated [National Library Week with a video](#) showcasing almost every student at the school engaged in one of our favorite activities -- reading!

❖ **Washington** - Students were hard at work with hockey and volleyball units in PE. Kindergartners were nice and cozy in their pj's while they worked on their learning!



Washington students play bingo to build their Spanish vocabulary.



Roosevelt's lunchtime Coding Club visited Google's offices in downtown Chicago to see the professional world of working with computers and enjoy hands-on projects.



Franklin students warmed up at a rally before their Track-a-thon fundraiser focusing on wellness.

District Happenings

NEW! Registration for 2015-16 school year is required for all students by Monday, June 1

To ensure that only District 64 residents benefit from the high quality education provided in our schools, the Board of Education has authorized the annual re-verification of residency for all students prior to registering for the 2015-16 school year. Registration must be completed by Monday, June 1.

Please follow these steps:

► From now through Friday, May 8, please visit your school to [provide acceptable documentation](#) as evidence that you physically reside at the residence listed for your child. Every school is offering extended hours for re-verification; principals have emailed this schedule. Families with students in multiple schools only need to visit the current school of their youngest child in grades K-7.

► Or, you may provide your documents at two all-District events -- all schools may attend -- from 5-7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 12 at Lincoln and Thursday, May 14 at Emerson.

► Once you have completed this first step, you will receive your child's "Snapcode" (one for each child) to enter the Infosnap online registration tool. You will be able to update additional student information and pay student fees for 2015-16. This is the same system introduced and successfully used last year, so it will be a familiar experience for most families.

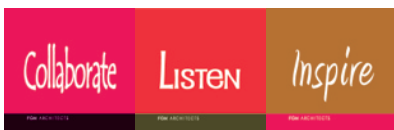
[Additional information is available on our website.](#) Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Residency must be verified and the Infosnap registration completed by MONDAY, JUNE 1. Please note that students will not be placed on a core/classroom list for 2015-16 until this process has been finished.

Progress continues on 2 important plans charting our future

► **Master Facilities Plan parent outreach in May**

As the District 64 Master Facilities Plan work moves forward, FGM Architects are meeting with teachers at all our schools for informal conversations about our buildings. Among the questions being considered are: what should learning look like in the Learning Resource Center now that we have moved to 1:1 in grades 3-8; how might classrooms be adapted for today's and tomorrow's learning; and how our auditorium spaces are being used now and how might they be used in the future. FGM now is planning outreach to parents to learn what you hope to see in your schools. These thoughts will help inform the development of the plan,



which together with the new 10-year Health Life Safety Study will guide the District's facility priorities in the future. Look for opportunities to participate to be announced in May!

► "2020 Vision" Strategic Plan intensive work continues

Approximately 25 members of the staff and community attended preview meetings of the "working draft" of our new strategic plan on April 15. Facilitator Bob Ewy took participants through the timeline our Steering Committee members have followed, and focused on the six challenges the plan hopes to address. The Steering



As we prepare to begin a new chapter, a [final report on the 2010-15 "Journey of Excellence" plan](#) was shared with the Board and the 2020 Vision Strategic Planning Committee in March. My report identified what areas were completed, what goals we are still working to achieve, and what areas may be worthwhile to consider bringing forward. I also shared "lessons learned" from the past that would be valuable for us to consider as the new plan is being shaped.

Committee met the next day to edit the draft plan and conduct a "SWOT" analysis of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

During these next few weeks, Mr. Ewy will compile the suggested edits of the six strategic goals (and their rationales) from the first draft and the SWOT analysis.

The SWOT analysis will help the District's leadership team develop a strategy "map" that defines what strategies the District is going to use to achieve the mission, vision, goals, and outcomes. The map graphically shows how the strategic goals ("the what") will be achieved and the SWOT analysis will be addressed. The leadership team also will develop a balanced scorecard of measures or indicators to track progress.

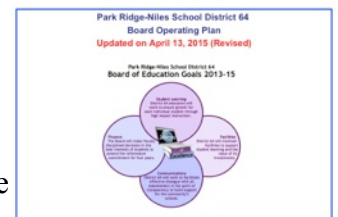
The committee at its final meeting on May 21 will thoroughly discuss and review all this work, and ultimately approve a plan to present to me as Superintendent.

The plan then goes to the Board of Education for approval, and returns to the District leadership to begin implementation for the 2015-16 school year.

► If you are interested in learning more about the "2020 Vision" planning process, please [visit the Committee's webpage](#) for further details.

Board Operating Plan offers updated projections

The Board of Education has developed an Operating Plan intended to provide a streamlined overview of all facets of District 64's operations in a handy, 4-page format. To provide perspective, a full 7 years of financial data can be accessed in one glance, spanning: 3 past years, the current budget, and 3 future years. The April 13 update includes the latest long-range projections. The [report is available](#) on the District's website.



On the Horizon...

Summer school begins Tuesday, June 16



District 64's morning "Worlds of Wonder" summer enrichment program offers two sessions this year: June 16-July 2 and July 6-22. Franklin School will be the home for students completing grades K-3, while students completing grades 4-7 will attend classes at Emerson Middle School. Registration links and course brochures can be found on the ["Worlds of Wonder" page](#) of the District 64 website. New this year, registration is being conducted conveniently online; registration is based on the

availability of classes. Student ID# is required to register (the ID# is found on your child's report card). Session 1 registration will end on June 18; Session 2 registration will end on July 8. Enroll soon as classes are filling!

New administrators to be named soon

District 64 will soon wrap up the search for a new principal at **Jefferson School** to replace Leslye Lapping, who will be retiring effective June 30. We have completed our screening of more than 40 applications received and conducted first round interviews; finalists will return for a second round soon. We also are getting started on the screening of applications for a new Assistant Principal at **Washington School** to replace Andy Petroline, who is leaving District 64 at year-end. We expect to begin interviews in May.

ELF plans spring fundraisers; grants to be announced May 18

ELF is sponsoring two fund-raising opportunities coming up soon: Wednesday, April 29 5-9 p.m. at Potbelly in Park Ridge - 25% of sales will be donated to ELF; and Saturday, May 16 "Got2Run for Education" where at least \$10 per participant will be donated. [See the ELF website for details.](#) ELF will be announcing its grants for the 2015-16 school year at the May 18 Board of Education meeting to provide innovative learning opportunities at our schools. We look forward to finding out this year's award winners!

THANK YOU for your continued
support and investment in District 64!

*For Your Children,
Dr. Laurie Heinz, Superintendent*

Logon to Facebook to "like" our District and school fan pages!